

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

FRANCISCO TINEO, on behalf of himself
and all others similarly situated,

Plaintiffs,

-against-

FRONTLINE ASSET STRATEGIES, LLC,

Defendant.

CIVIL ACTION
CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT
AND
DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

Plaintiff FRANCISCO TINEO (hereinafter, “Plaintiff”), a New York resident, brings this class action complaint by and through his attorneys, Joseph H. Mizrahi Law, P.C., against Defendant FRONTLINE ASSET STRATEGIES, LLC (hereinafter “Defendant”), individually and on behalf of a class of all others similarly situated, pursuant to Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, based upon information and belief of Plaintiff’s counsel, except for allegations specifically pertaining to Plaintiff, which are based upon Plaintiff’s personal knowledge.

INTRODUCTION/PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

1. Congress enacted the FDCPA in 1977 in response to the “abundant evidence of the use of abusive, deceptive, and unfair debt collection practices by many debt collectors.” 15 U.S.C. § 1692(a). At that time, Congress was concerned that “abusive debt collection practices contribute to the number of personal bankruptcies, to material instability, to the loss of jobs, and to invasions of individual privacy.” *Id.* Congress concluded that “existing laws . . . [we]re inadequate to protect consumers,” and that “the effective collection of debts” does not require “misrepresentation or other abusive debt collection practices.” 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692(b) & (c).
2. Congress explained that the purpose of the Act was not only to eliminate abusive debt collection practices, but also to “insure that those debt collectors who refrain from using

abusive debt collection practices are not competitively disadvantaged.” *Id.* § 1692(e). After determining that the existing consumer protection laws were inadequate, *id.* § 1692(b), Congress gave consumers a private cause of action against debt collectors who fail to comply with the Act. *Id.* § 1692k.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

3. The Court has jurisdiction over this class action under 28 U.S.C. § 1331, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 *et seq.* and 28 U.S.C. § 2201. If applicable, the Court also has pendent jurisdiction over the state law claims in this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367(a).
4. Venue is proper in this judicial district pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b)(2).

NATURE OF THE ACTION

5. Plaintiff brings this class action on behalf of a class of New York consumers seeking redress for Defendant’s actions of using an unfair and unconscionable means to collect a debt.
6. Defendant's actions violated § 1692 *et seq.* of Title 15 of the United States Code, commonly referred to as the Fair Debt Collections Practices Act (“FDCPA”) which prohibits debt collectors from engaging in abusive, deceptive and unfair practices.
7. Plaintiff is seeking damages, and declaratory and injunctive relief.

PARTIES

8. Plaintiff is a natural person and a resident of the State of New York, and is a “Consumer” as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692(a)(3).
9. Defendant is a collection agency with an office maintained in Roseville, Minnesota.
10. Upon information and belief, Defendant is a company that uses the mail, telephone, and facsimile and regularly engages in business the principal purpose of which is to attempt to collect debts alleged to be due another.
11. Defendant is a “debt collector,” as defined under the FDCPA under 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(6).

CLASS ALLEGATIONS

12. Plaintiff brings claims, pursuant to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (hereinafter “FRCP”)

Rule 23, individually and on behalf of the following consumer class (the “Class”):

- Plaintiff brings this action individually and as a class action on behalf of all persons similarly situated in the State of New York from whom Defendant attempted to collect a consumer debt using the same unlawful form letter herein, from one year before the date of this Complaint to the present.
- The Class satisfies all the requirements of Rule 23 of the FRCP for maintaining a class action:

13. The Class satisfies all the requirements of Rule 23 of the FRCP for maintaining a class action:

- Upon information and belief, the Class is so numerous that joinder of all members is impracticable because there are hundreds and/or thousands of persons who have received debt collection letters and/or notices from Defendant that violate specific provisions of the FDCPA. Plaintiff is complaining of a standard form letter and/or notice that is sent to hundreds of persons (*See **Exhibit A***, except that the undersigned attorney has, in accordance with Fed. R. Civ. P. 5.2 partially redacted the financial account numbers in an effort to protect Plaintiff’s privacy);
- There are questions of law and fact which are common to the Class and which predominate over questions affecting any individual Class member. These common questions of law and fact include, without limitation:
 - a. Whether Defendant violated various provisions of the FDCPA;
 - b. Whether Plaintiff and the Class have been injured by Defendant’s conduct;

- c. Whether Plaintiff and the Class have sustained damages and are entitled to restitution as a result of Defendant's wrongdoing and if so, what is the proper measure and appropriate statutory formula to be applied in determining such damages and restitution; and
- d. Whether Plaintiff and the Class are entitled to declaratory and/or injunctive relief.

- Plaintiff's claims are typical of the Class, which all arise from the same operative facts and are based on the same legal theories.
- Plaintiff has no interest adverse or antagonistic to the interest of the other members of the Class.
- Plaintiff will fairly and adequately protect the interest of the Class and has retained experienced and competent attorneys to represent the Class.
- A Class Action is superior to other methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of the claims herein asserted. Plaintiff anticipates that no unusual difficulties are likely to be encountered in the management of this class action.
- A Class Action will permit large numbers of similarly situated persons to prosecute their common claims in a single forum simultaneously and without the duplication of effort and expense that numerous individual actions would engender. Class treatment will also permit the adjudication of relatively small claims by many Class members who could not otherwise afford to seek legal redress for the wrongs complained of herein. Absent a Class Action, class members will continue to suffer losses of statutory protected rights as well as monetary damages. If

Defendant's conduct is allowed to proceed without remedy they will continue to reap and retain the proceeds of their ill-gotten gains.

- Defendant has acted on grounds generally applicable to the entire Class, thereby making appropriate final injunctive relief or corresponding declaratory relief with respect to the Class as a whole.

ALLEGATIONS OF FACT PARTICULAR TO FRANCISCO TINEO

14. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "13" herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.
15. Defendant collects and attempts to collect debts incurred or alleged to have been incurred for personal, family or household purposes on behalf of creditors using the United States Postal Services, telephone and Internet.
16. Upon information and belief, within the last year Defendant commenced efforts to collect an alleged consumer "debt" as defined by 15 U.S.C. 1692a(5), when it mailed a Collection Letter to Plaintiff seeking to collect an unpaid balance allegedly owing to CAPITAL ONE, N.A..
17. On or about January 9, 2017, Plaintiff received a collection letter from Defendant (the "Letter"). *See Exhibit A.*
18. The Letter was sent or caused to be sent by persons employed by Defendant as a "debt collector" as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(6).
19. The Letter is a "communication" as defined by 15 U.S.C. §1692a(2).
20. The Letter states in pertinent part: "As of the date of this letter, you owe \$1,947.90."
21. As a result of the following Counts Defendant violated the FDCPA.

First Count
15 U.S.C. §1692e et seq.
False or Misleading Representations as to Status of Debt

22. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and incorporates the allegations contained in paragraphs numbered “1” through “21” herein with the same force and effect as if the same were set forth at length herein.
23. Defendant’s debt collection efforts attempted and/or directed towards Plaintiff violated various provisions of the FDCPA, including but not limited to 15 U.S.C. § 1692e.
24. Pursuant to 15 U.S.C. §1692e, a debt collector is prohibited from using false, deceptive, or misleading representation in connection with the collection of a debt.
25. While § 1692e specifically prohibits certain practices, the list is non-exhaustive, and does not preclude a claim of falsity or deception based on non-enumerated practice.
26. Collection notices are deceptive if they can be reasonably read to have two or more different meanings, one of which is inaccurate.
27. The question of whether a collection letter is deceptive is determined from the perspective of the “least sophisticated consumer.”
28. Defendant’s conduct constitutes a false, deceptive and misleading means and representation in connection with the collection of the debt, in violation of 15 U.S.C. § 1692e.
29. The Letter can reasonably be read by the least sophisticated consumer to have two or more meanings concerning the actual balance due, one of which must be inaccurate, in violation of 15 U.S.C. § 1692e.
30. By stating “As of the date of this letter, you owe \$1,947.90,” Defendant falsely suggested that immediate payment of the balance would benefit Plaintiff by implying that the Balance would be subject to change, and could be subject to additional interest.¹

¹ I recognize that ambiguity can be indicative of a misleading or deceptive communication. See *Easterling v. Collecto, Inc.*, 692 F.3d 229, 233 (2d Cir. 2012). But *Avila* compels the conclusion that any ambiguity as to post-

31. Plaintiff's account was not subject to the accrual of interest.
32. In the alternative, Plaintiff's account was subject to the accrual of interest, but Defendant's communication failed to adequately disclose same.
33. Defendant's debt collection efforts attempted and/or directed towards Plaintiff violated various provisions of the FDCPA, including but not limited to § 1692(e).
34. By reason thereof, Defendant is liable to Plaintiff for judgment that Defendant's conduct violated Section 1692e *et seq.* of the FDCPA, actual damages, statutory damages, costs and attorneys' fees.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demands judgment against Defendants as follows:

- (a) Declaring that this action is properly maintainable as a Class Action and certifying Plaintiff as Class representative and Joseph H. Mizrahi Law, P.C., as Class Counsel;
- (b) Awarding Plaintiff and the Class statutory damages;
- (c) Awarding Plaintiff and the Class actual damages;
- (d) Awarding Plaintiff costs of this Action, including reasonable attorneys' fees and expenses;
- (e) Awarding pre-judgment interest and post-judgment interest; and
- (f) Awarding Plaintiff and the Class such other and further relief as this Court may deem just and proper.

dated accruals in a collection notice gives rise to a claim under the general prohibition of § 1692e – even if the ambiguity does no harm or even inures to the benefit of the debtor. *FATEMA ISLAM, Individually and on behalf of a class, Pl., v. AMERICAN RECOVERY SERVICE INCORPORATED*, Def., 17-CV-4228 (BMC), 2017 WL 4990570, at *2 (E.D.N.Y. Oct. 31, 2017).

Respectfully submitted,

By: /s/ Joseph H. Mizrahi
Joseph H. Mizrahi, Esq.
Joseph H. Mizrahi Law, P.C.
300 Cadman Plaza West, 12 Floor
Brooklyn, New York 11201
Phone: (917) 299-6612
Fax: (718) 425-8954
Email: Joseph@Jmizrahilaw.com
Attorneys for Plaintiff

DEMAND FOR TRIAL BY JURY

Pursuant to Rule 38 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Plaintiff hereby requests a trial by jury on all issues so triable.

/s/ Joseph H. Mizrahi
Joseph H. Mizrahi, Esq.

Dated: Brooklyn, New York
January 9, 2018

CIVIL COVER SHEET

The JS 44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings or other papers as required by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form, approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in September 1974, is required for the use of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil docket sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON NEXT PAGE OF THIS FORM.)

I. (a) PLAINTIFFS

FRANCISCO TINEO, on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated

(b) County of Residence of First Listed Plaintiff Queens (EXCEPT IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES)

(c) Attorneys (Firm Name, Address, and Telephone Number)

JOSEPH H. MIZRAHI LAW, P.C., 300 Cadman Plz W, 12 Fl., Brooklyn, NY 11201, (917) 299-6612

DEFENDANTS

FRONTLINE ASSET STRATEGIES, LLC

County of Residence of First Listed Defendant (IN U.S. PLAINTIFF CASES ONLY)

NOTE: IN LAND CONDEMNATION CASES, USE THE LOCATION OF THE TRACT OF LAND INVOLVED.

Attorneys (If Known)

II. BASIS OF JURISDICTION (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- 1 U.S. Government Plaintiff, 2 U.S. Government Defendant, 3 Federal Question (U.S. Government Not a Party), 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)

III. CITIZENSHIP OF PRINCIPAL PARTIES (Place an "X" in One Box for Plaintiff and One Box for Defendant)

Table with columns for Plaintiff (PTF) and Defendant (DEF) citizenship and business location (Citizen of This State, Citizen of Another State, Citizen or Subject of a Foreign Country, Incorporated or Principal Place of Business In This State, Incorporated and Principal Place of Business In Another State, Foreign Nation).

IV. NATURE OF SUIT (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

Click here for: Nature of Suit Code Descriptions.

Large table with categories: CONTRACT, REAL PROPERTY, CIVIL RIGHTS, TORTS, PRISONER PETITIONS, FORFEITURE/PENALTY, LABOR, IMMIGRATION, BANKRUPTCY, SOCIAL SECURITY, FEDERAL TAX SUITS, OTHER STATUTES.

V. ORIGIN (Place an "X" in One Box Only)

- 1 Original Proceeding, 2 Removed from State Court, 3 Remanded from Appellate Court, 4 Reinstated or Reopened, 5 Transferred from Another District (specify), 6 Multidistrict Litigation - Transfer, 8 Multidistrict Litigation - Direct File

VI. CAUSE OF ACTION

Cite the U.S. Civil Statute under which you are filing (Do not cite jurisdictional statutes unless diversity): 15 USC 1692

Brief description of cause: Defendant violated the FDCPA

VII. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:

CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS ACTION UNDER RULE 23, F.R.Cv.P. DEMAND \$

CHECK YES only if demanded in complaint: JURY DEMAND: Yes No

VIII. RELATED CASE(S) IF ANY

(See instructions):

JUDGE DOCKET NUMBER

DATE SIGNATURE OF ATTORNEY OF RECORD

01/09/2018 /s/ Joseph H. Mizrahi

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

RECEIPT # AMOUNT APPLYING IFP JUDGE MAG. JUDGE

CERTIFICATION OF ARBITRATION ELIGIBILITY

Local Arbitration Rule 83.10 provides that with certain exceptions, actions seeking money damages only in an amount not in excess of \$150,000, exclusive of interest and costs, are eligible for compulsory arbitration. The amount of damages is presumed to be below the threshold amount unless a certification to the contrary is filed.

I, JOSEPH H. MIZRAHI, counsel for PLAINTIFF, do hereby certify that the above captioned civil action is ineligible for compulsory arbitration for the following reason(s):

- monetary damages sought are in excess of \$150,000, exclusive of interest and costs,
- the complaint seeks injunctive relief,
- the matter is otherwise ineligible for the following reason Question of law rather than question of fact predominates

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT - FEDERAL RULES CIVIL PROCEDURE 7.1

Identify any parent corporation and any publicly held corporation that owns 10% or more of its stocks:

NONE

RELATED CASE STATEMENT (Section VIII on the Front of this Form)

Please list all cases that are arguably related pursuant to Division of Business Rule 50.3.1 in Section VIII on the front of this form. Rule 50.3.1 (a) provides that "A civil case is "related" to another civil case for purposes of this guideline when, because of the similarity of facts and legal issues or because the cases arise from the same transactions or events, a substantial saving of judicial resources is likely to result from assigning both cases to the same judge and magistrate judge." Rule 50.3.1 (b) provides that " A civil case shall not be deemed "related" to another civil case merely because the civil case: (A) involves identical legal issues, or (B) involves the same parties." Rule 50.3.1 (c) further provides that "Presumptively, and subject to the power of a judge to determine otherwise pursuant to paragraph (d), civil cases shall not be deemed to be "related" unless both cases are still pending before the court."

NY-E DIVISION OF BUSINESS RULE 50.1(d)(2)

- 1.) Is the civil action being filed in the Eastern District removed from a New York State Court located in Nassau or Suffolk County? Yes No
- 2.) If you answered "no" above:
 - a) Did the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in Nassau or Suffolk County? Yes No
 - b) Did the events or omissions giving rise to the claim or claims, or a substantial part thereof, occur in the Eastern District? Yes No
 - c) If this is a Fair Debt Collection Practice Act case, specify the County in which the offending communication was received: Queens County .

If your answer to question 2 (b) is "No," does the defendant (or a majority of the defendants, if there is more than one) reside in Nassau or Suffolk County, or, in an interpleader action, does the claimant (or a majority of the claimants, if there is more than one) reside in Nassau or Suffolk County? Yes No

(Note: A corporation shall be considered a resident of the County in which it has the most significant contacts).

BAR ADMISSION

I am currently admitted in the Eastern District of New York and currently a member in good standing of the bar of this court.

Yes No

Are you currently the subject of any disciplinary action (s) in this or any other state or federal court?

Yes (If yes, please explain) No

I certify the accuracy of all information provided above.

Signature: /s/ Joseph H. Mizrahi

Civil Action No. _____

PROOF OF SERVICE

(This section should not be filed with the court unless required by Fed. R. Civ. P. 4 (l))

This summons for *(name of individual and title, if any)* _____
was received by me on *(date)* _____ .

I personally served the summons on the individual at *(place)* _____
_____ on *(date)* _____ ; or

I left the summons at the individual's residence or usual place of abode with *(name)* _____
_____, a person of suitable age and discretion who resides there,
on *(date)* _____ , and mailed a copy to the individual's last known address; or

I served the summons on *(name of individual)* _____ , who is
designated by law to accept service of process on behalf of *(name of organization)* _____
_____ on *(date)* _____ ; or

I returned the summons unexecuted because _____ ; or

Other *(specify)*:

My fees are \$ _____ for travel and \$ _____ for services, for a total of \$ _____ 0.00 .

I declare under penalty of perjury that this information is true.

Date: _____

Server's signature

Printed name and title

Server's address

Additional information regarding attempted service, etc:



TO MAKE AN ONLINE PAYMENT ARRANGEMENT VISIT WWW.PAYFRONTLINE.COM



FRANCISCO TINEO



000816

Frontline Asset Strategies, LLC
2700 Snelling Ave N.
Ste 250
Roseville, MN 55113



Date: 01/03/2017

Current Creditor to whom the debt is owed: LVNV FUNDING LLC
Original Creditor: CAPITAL ONE, N.A.
Account Description: BANKCARD
Original Creditor#: xxxxxxxxxxxxxx6194
Charge-off Date: 11/30/2016
FAST #: [REDACTED]0536
Total Amount Due: \$1,947.90
Last Pay Date: 04/17/2016
Total Due as of Charge-off: \$1947.9
Total Interest Accrued Since Charge-off: \$0
Total non-interest Charges or
Fee Accrued Since Charge-off: \$0
Total Paid on Debt Since Charge-off: \$0

Dear FRANCISCO TINEO:

Debt Collectors, in accordance with the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1692 et seq., are prohibited from engaging in abusive, deceptive, and unfair debt collection efforts, including but not limited to:

- The use or threat of violence; the use of obscene or profane language; and repeated phone calls made with the intent to annoy, abuse, or harass.

If a creditor or debt collector receives a money judgment against you in court, state and federal laws may prevent the following types of income from being taken to pay the debt:

- 1) Supplemental security income, (SSI); 2) Social security; (3) Public assistance (welfare); (4) Spousal support, maintenance (alimony), or child support; (5) Unemployment benefits; (6) Disability benefits; (7) Workers' compensation benefits; (8) Public or private pensions; (9) Veterans' benefits; (10) Federal student loans, federal student grants, and federal work study funds; and (11) Ninety percent of your wages or salary earned in the last sixty days.

Your current creditor has placed the above-mentioned account in our office to resolve. Your lack of communication may result in the enforcement of your current creditor's rights on your contractual agreement. Please note that a negative credit bureau report reflecting on your credit record may be submitted to a credit reporting agency by the current account owner if you fail to fulfill the terms of your credit obligations. This notice in no way affects any rights you may have.

As of the date of this letter, you owe \$1,947.90. Go to our secure website, www.payfrontline.com, make payment in full or to see what payment options may be available to you.

If you cannot make payment in full, please call our office at 877-258-1590 to discuss alternate payment arrangements. Remember, we here at Frontline Asset Strategies are here to assist you in resolving this outstanding debt and moving forward. We strive to work with you, not against you.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This communication is from a debt collector and is an attempt to collect a debt.
Any information obtained will be used for that purpose.

Please see the reverse side or next page for important consumer notices.

Frontline Asset Strategies, LLC • 2700 Snelling Ave N. • Ste 250 • Roseville, MN 55113
Toll Free: 877-258-1590 Fax: 6516212879

Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday 7AM-9PM CST • Saturday 8AM-12PM CST



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Thank you for your time and attention regarding the resolution of this debt. Nothing contained in this letter changes or alters your consumer rights. Calls to or from this company, along with communications via live chat, may be monitored or recorded.

Sincerely,
Troy Tratar
877-258-1590
Frontline Asset Strategies, LLC

Unless you notify this office within 30 days after receiving this notice that you dispute the validity of this debt, or any portion thereof, this office will assume this debt is valid. If you notify this office in writing within 30 days from receiving this notice that you dispute the validity of this debt, or any portion thereof, this office will obtain verification of the debt or obtain a copy of a judgment and mail you a copy of such judgment or verification. If you request, in writing, of this office within 30 days after receiving this notice this office will provide you with the name and address of the original creditor, if different from the current creditor.

City of New York, Department of Consumer Affairs License Number is 1301837.

ClassAction.org

This complaint is part of ClassAction.org's searchable class action lawsuit database and can be found in this post: [FDCPA Suit Filed Against Frontline Asset Strategies](#)
